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ABSTRACT

This report presents strategies and guidelines to manage and administer homestays and village stays for U.S. students, based on a survey of academic directors and homestay coordinators, with a focus on such activities in Latin America and the Caribbean. It reviews the literature on the role and cost of homestay and village stay programs in semester and year-abroad programs. Based on survey responses, it then goes on to examine such issues as the variables that influence successful homestays and village stays, the role of academic directors and homestay coordinators, family selection and payment, family composition, orientation/follow-up, and problems and resolution mechanisms. Specific guidelines to address problems and concerns in these areas are provided. Three appendixes contain a sample student questionnaire; homestay materials provided by programs in Jamaica, Brazil, and Bolivia; and an annotated bibliography (Contains 29 references.) (MDM)

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HOMESTAY/VILLAGE STAY STUDY IN THE AMERICAS - 1994-96

by Linda Farthing, Academic Studies Abroad,
School for International Training

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HOMESTAY/VILLAGE STAY STUDY IN THE AMERICAS - 1994-96

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Introduction:

The decision to undertake a study on the homestay and village stay components of CSA programs was made because while these components are an essential element in integrating students into the host culture, CSA has never attempted to examine them in detail and synthesize experiences. As a result, successful strategies and procedures for how to effectively manage homestays and village stays have remained the personal knowledge of individual coordinators and Academic Directors (ADs). This has meant that new ADs and homestay/village stay coordinators have had largely to start from scratch in finding solutions to problems that had already been addressed by other ADs/coordinators in other locations.

The goal of this study is to break this pattern and synthesize the experience in the Americas region, review the literature for practical experiences in other similar programs, and on the basis of these two elements, develop some guidelines on homestay and village stay management. Programs which participated in the study are: Belize (two Academic Directors [ADs]), Bolivia (two ADs), Brazil-Amazon, Brazil-Fortaleza, Chile (two ADs), Ecuador-Ecology and Regular (three ADs), Jamaica, Mexico, and Venezuela-Ecology.

The study began with a session held at the Academic Directors' workshop for ADs from the Americas region in August 1994 to elicit information, perspectives and concerns about homestays and village stays. On the basis of this discussion, three questionnaires (one each for ADs and homestay coordinators, and one for both of them) were elaborated and sent out in early November 1994.

The homestay component of the study covered the following topics: 1) what role homestays play in a program and how the learning in homestays is integrated into the educational goals of the program; 2) what criteria are used for family selection and why, including information on repeat placements; 3) how families and coordinators are compensated; 4) what kind of orientation, support and follow-up is currently given to students and families and why; 5) problems that arise in homestays; 6) the composition (class, size, gender, # of children) of homestay families and why; 7) role of homestay coordinators; 8) role of homestays during Independent Study Projects.

The questions on the village stay component go into less detail, in part because virtually nothing was found in the literature on these type of cross-cultural encounters. However, the Academic Directors supplied information

on 1) site selection criteria; 2) length of stay and why; 3) pros and cons of including a work camp; 4) academic and experiential learning goals; and 5) ethical concerns and problems.

For the purposes of the study, homestays were defined as any stays with host country families that were over two weeks. In addition, it is important to note that there are considerable variations in the homestay experience, length being one of the most frequent. In Mexico there are two homestays, in Bolivia there are two coordinators and in Belize, when this study was conducted, the homestay was in a rural area and therefore in many ways more akin to a village stay.

The report is organized into topic areas with a discussion of the literature, followed by perspectives from the AD discussion in August 1994, and finally by the responses from the questionnaires. The response rate on the questionnaires was complete - however, in some cases, the questions were not clearly understood, in others only parts of the question were answered, and in the AD/homestay coordinator questionnaire, in some cases it was answered by both, and in others only by the homestay coordinator. However as the questions were oriented to information gathering with the goal of sharing strategies and ideas within the region (and beyond), these limitations are not considered to undermine the usefulness of the study.

In addition to the study itself, there are three Appendices: Appendix 1 is a sample of the kind of information that homestay coordinators would like to see added to the Dear Family Letter form; Appendix 2 contains homestay materials used in the Americas; Appendix 3 is an annotated bibliography.

Homestays:

The literature on homestays consists of two basic types. One type examines students and families who have participated in homestays and attempts to measure the impact of the homestay on the student and the family. The other provides practical guides of do's and don'ts for setting up cross-cultural homestay programs. The following section discusses the first type of literature.

Role of Homestay in Overall Program Goals:

The literature about intercultural and academic semester abroad programs repeatedly stresses the importance of cultural adaptation in the program's success. For example, Students Abroad: Strangers at Home (Kaufman 1992), found that the student's degree of maturity and his/her immersion into the

success. For example, Students Abroad: Strangers at Home (Kaufman 1992), found that the student's degree of maturity and his/her immersion into the host culture were key to students' success. Altbach et al. (1985) argue that "next to academic success, positive contact with the natives of the host country ranks at the very top of international student needs." (p. 25) A study by Hull in 1978 (cited in Altbach) reported that international students who had frequent positive cross-cultural contact with Americans were the most likely to experience "less loneliness and homesickness, more favorable attitudes about their experience in general, less desire to return home". This finding is corroborated by studies on other students in countries as diverse as Brazil, Canada, France, India, Iran, Japan and Kenya.

Given the crucial nature of cross-cultural adaptation to a student's overall success, the question arises as to how this adaptation can best be achieved. The homestay emerges as one of the best mechanisms available to program designers. Gordon (1974) in his detailed study of US student homestays in Colombia argued that "family living...allows the stranger to assume a more meaningful role than as a tourist; it provides the additional vantage point of direct participation in the culture as a balance to studying about it." It is worth noting that Lee (1983, 1989) found that homestays should be at least a month in duration to have a positive role in a program. Short homestays were considered to be too stressful for both the student and family, and not able to successfully contribute to cross-cultural adaptation and learning. Problems with short homestays in not being able to adequately meet homestay goals were also noted by other researchers. (Tuffo, 1994)

However some Academic Directors have a different perception of how the homestay is handled. In the August 1994 discussion, Bill Stone (Mexico) felt that students don't value homestays and questions whether this is because of poor orientation of the students prior to arrival in country. He reported that students don't like the restrictions imposed by homestays. Mimi Marchev (Chile) felt that while homestays were useful, CSA students are already overscheduled and complain of not having enough time with their families. This complaint was echoed by Shirley Campbell who had heard it from her students in Jamaica. Pamela Calla (Bolivia) felt the homestay is crucial: students need connections, and if they don't find it in their homestay, they will seek it elsewhere, sometimes without success, which will negatively impact their satisfaction with their entire experience and can negatively impact their academic performance.

Tom Kruse (Bolivia), discussed how homestay families can be incorporated into overall program goals. He mentioned that family composition, size, class etc. can function as an excellent mechanism to examine the society as a whole. He argued that a homestay placement in a westernized middle to upper middle class family can be very effective for students who come looking for the "exotic" in the south.

In their questionnaire responses, all ADs, with the exception of two, considered the homestays to be an integral component in their program. The remaining two, Brazil-Amazon and Belize (Matt Miller) considered homestays moderately important. (Note that both these programs focus on environmental studies - the experiential basis for these programs tends to emphasize natural, not social, systems.) The reasons given for this importance are varied: homestays are considered to provide students a major cultural inroad, a time to slow down and integrate, a means of strengthening language skiiis, a vital support system, a cultural immersion and a perspective on daily life, a place where students learn most about the culture and language, a crucial component in student integration and as the most important and real aspect of the program.

Compiling AD responses, the ideal homestay is defined as a family with the following characteristics: engaged and active, open and sharing , a strong connection to the local community, a sense of pride in their own culture, time to spend with the students and someone frequently home, middle to lower income, adequate space for a student, and children. In terms of children, most ADs and homestay coordinators feel they are not crucial to a successful homestay, but those who do think they are important, prefer families with children over 7, and most prefer those over 13. One AD mentioned that the ideal homestay was one in which the student recognized that s/he had to do most of the adjusting and giving. All programs have used single parent families without difficulty and many feel they are a good choice because they reflect the reality of Latin American and Caribbean society. In single parent families, students often can get more attention and form closer relationships, but ADs emphasize that it is important that students are comfortable with this kind of family before placement.

When asked how they integrate what is learned in the homestay into the program, ADs accomplish this through informal discussions, some of which are part of the Life and Culture Seminar, and through written assignments in the MTFSS (Methods and Techniques of Field Studies Seminar). To safeguard family privacy in this process, particularly in discussions, most ADs explicitly discuss this concern with students, often during orientation or prior to discussions. Other strategies include: informing families that there is a group discussion about the homestay, asking students not to write private family information in their observation journals, asking students not to give the impression that they are analyzing family members, and taking care that family life histories are only seen by the AD.

<u>Impact of Homestays on Students:</u>

skepticism of stereotypes, sociability, extrovertedness, responsibility, spontaneity, adaptability, respect for other cultures, self-confidence and self-esteem, independence and competition. (Hansel, 1985 and 1986, Stitsworth and Sugiyama, 1990, Hensley and Sell, 1979, Altbach et al. 1985)

Martin (1985) examined how an overseas homestay affected relationships once the students returned home. She found minimal impact on the family relationship except for increased frequency of communication between parents and child. She did identify a strong impact on friendships with peers and particularly on romantic attachments because of the increased maturity of the returned student.

Variables Influencing Successful Homestays:

Altbach et al. (1985) identify three key variables that affect the success of a student's experience overseas. These are language proficiency, previous travel experience and the absence of discriminatory attitudes. Gordon (1974) argues that goodwill, sensitivity and intelligence are not a substitute for knowledge of the nonlinguistic cultural patterns in cross-cultural communication and that facility in the foreign language is necessary but not sufficient to guarantee success.

Lee and Hansel (1982) found that a successful host experience was directly related to positive personality factors rather than cultural factors. The most important relationship influencing success was a positive student-host sibling relationship rather than student-host parent relationships. In contrast in Colombia, Gordon (1974) found that the key relationship was with the señora who served as an important element in orienting students to the culture and to whom the students frequently turned for advice. Lee and Hansel (1982) also found that exchange student willingness to become involved in host family activities and infrequent contact with the student's natural parents are crucial.

King and Huff (1985) describe the difficulties of determining the role that a homestay participant will play in the family. One study found that homestays were easier for females than males because more female roles are provided in the home. (Baty and Dold, 1977) Various authors stress how crucial it is for both students and host families to have realistic goals. (Gordon, 1974; Lee, 1989) King and Huff argue that the tendency is to try and place new people in a family situation into familiar roles. They say that an exchange student is often placed in the following roles: 1) a family role which can be awkward because of conflicting loyalties and not really a fit; 2) a house guest role which creates too much strain on the family to be polite etc.; 3) a neighborhood chum role which is a strain on the student who finds him/herself always trying to be polite. Therefore the challenge for both the student and the

homestay family is to develop a new kind of family role which encompasses the student.

Stages of the Homestay experience:

King and Huff further describe stages of homestays which need to be taken into account by organizers in developing successful homestays:

-Arrival (importance of clarifying student's personal space, family rules and responsibilities, how to address family members, etc.)

-Settling in (adjusting routines and coming to terms with unrealistic expectations)

-Deepening the relationship (more adjusting to routines and discussing differences)

-Culture shock (understanding it and allowing students time out from the culture to adjust)

-Culture learning

-Pre-departure

-Re-adjustment

Homestay Coordinators:

In CSA programs, homestay coordinators have been identified through AD personal contacts or through institutional affiliations established by the program. The homestay coordinator's role generally includes some or all of the following: finding families, orienting them, paying them, matching them with students, orienting students, following up with students, solving problems, facilitating evaluation and debriefing (families and students) and organizing/participating in the family party. The only Americas program that has a formal job description for the homestay coordinator is Bolivia (see Appendix 2). Several ADs noted that the most important characteristic in choosing a homestay coordinator is strong communication skills and an understanding of cross-cultural issues.

In seven of the ten programs, ADs noted that there had been problems with the homestay coordinator. These problems included: excessive repetition of families; all families from elite groups; inappropriate behavior with students; insufficient attention to the job such as finding good families and following up on problem placements. Most of these problems have been resolved through discussion and negotiation, but three of the ten programs reported firing the homestay coordinator.

Academic Directors are involved to varying degrees in the homestay process, depending in part on what they have inherited from previous ADs, the capability of their homestay coordinator and their personal styles. In four programs, the ADs do virtually nothing; in one, ADs assist the coordinator

programs, the ADs do virtually nothing; in one, ADs assist the coordinator with the matches, intervene with the coordinator when there are problems, and lead the orientation and debriefing with families and students. Most ADs do some but not all of these tasks.

All programs pay the coordinator per student placed. This ranges from $50 - $100 per student for urban homestays depending on the country. There have not been problems with payments to coordinators.

Homestay coordinators reported that the most difficult parts of their jobs are adequately matching students to families, finding good families, and solving problems when they arise. With one exception, they felt that the information that they had about SIT and the program itself was adequate. To make their jobs easier, ALL homestay coordinators asked for more detailed information on students well in advance of the program.

To improve the homestays in their programs, homestay coordinators uniformly wanted to see the student orientation strengthened. Several mentioned that families needed to be better oriented as well, particularly about culture shock. Coordinators suggested that student orientations to the homestay emphasize flexibility, open-mindedness and the need to adapt, teach students about servants, provide them more information about where they are going and what is dangerous, etc., and teach students the importance of basic etiquette.

Family Selection & Payment:

The literature suggests that it is easier to resolve problems with homestay families when they are not personal friends or relatives of the homestay coordinator or Academic Director. (Grove 1982) The vast majority of homestay families are located through the homestay coordinators. Five percent or fewer are identified through Academic Director contacts in all cases except Jamaica, where the AD identifies 20% of the families.

The criteria used for families include (in order of the number of times mentioned): the number of family members (three programs); cleanliness (two programs); emotional stability and maturity (two programs); interest in and respect for other cultures (two programs); location/good education; whole family's agreement to accept student; agreeable/pleasant family; interest in program (identified as the most important factor in success); bed for student; car; telephone; family willingness to share home/time; middle to lower income status.

The kinds of families to be avoided are (in descending order of the number of times mentioned) are those: motivated by money (four programs); too

wealthy (two programs); distant from transportation and program site (two programs); conflictual; racist; narrow; without children; little cultural pride; drinkers; where only one family member is interested and where the family is unavailable. One coordinator noted that it is important to bear in mind that families are not static; an excellent family may change internally in some way which makes it an inappropriate placement in a subsequent or future semester.

The kinds of issues that arise with families are the following (in order of the number of times mentioned): the difficulty of establishing an equilibrium between the independence of the student and the role of the student in the family; complaints about the amount of payment; racism against student of color; problems with student food preferences; families misrepresenting themselves; shortage of housing and space for student; and jealousies among families.

In terms of the criteria for matching students and families the following were identified (in order of the number of times mentioned): similar interests (five programs); those able to accommodate vegetarians (three programs). Personality, age and gender, low-income, cleanliness, well-known family, and stability were also mentioned.

Half the programs had participation limits for families. This ranged from one program that rarely repeats families to another that has no limits but which gives preference to new families. One program allows families one student a year with no limit on the number of years. Two programs reported no limits at all. The reasons given for not imposing limits revolved around the difficulties experienced in recruiting and orienting new families. It was generally acknowledged that repeats tend to vocally compare students which makes current students uncomfortable, and it was also noted that repeat placements can create dependency and can lead to students being taken for granted.

All CSA-Americas programs reimburse families. This ranged from $7.50/night/student in Merida, Venezuela to $20 a night in Belize. None of the programs had considered any means of non-financial remuneration for the families (such as inviting selected family members to accompany the group on excursions or participate in program activities). However interest was expressed by some homestay coordinators in the possibility of developing an exchange so that family members could go to the US.

Family Composition:

The majority of CSA homestays in the Americas are with middle class families (as defined by the respondent), ranging from 30% of all families in Brazil-Amazon and Mexico-Oaxaca to 85% in Belize, Bolivia and Jamaica

average of 35% of families are from upper class or upper middle class families, with a range from 70% in Mexico-Morelia to 0% in Belize, Brazil-Fortaleza and Chile. Working class families make up an average of 11% of all homestay families with a narrow range of between 0% in both Mexico homestays and 20% in Bolivia.

On average, 39% of homestay families have three members or fewer, with a range from 20% in Brazil-Amazon to 80% in Mexico-Morelia and Ecuador. Fifty-one percent have three to five members, with a range from 15% in Ecuador to 100% in Bolivia. Only 10% have six members or more, ranging from 1% in Chile to 46% in Belize. Fifty-eight percent of family members are female, with Chile and Ecuador having 70% female. Forty-five percent have two children or less, with Jamaica and Mexico-Morelia registering the highest percentage of this number of children; 52% have three to five children with Brazil-Fortaleza and Ecuador with the highest percentage in this size range, and 3% have five children or more. Fifteen percent of families have children under six, 18% have children between seven and twelve, 32% have children thirteen to seventeen, and finally 35% have children over eighteen.

All programs, with the exception of Jamaica and Chile, felt that the socio-economic composition of the families is good. Chile felt they had not examined this sufficiently to be able to answer and Jamaica felt that more diversity was needed. When specifically asked if more class diversity was needed, only Mexico-Oaxaca felt that it is unnecessary. The reasons given for more diversity are as follows: to make the homestay more closely reflect the country's reality (Belize and Brazil-Fortaleza); to better be able to compare between different social classes (Venezuela); to enrich the program (Bolivia); and to avoid families that are too similar culturally to the U.S. (Jamaica).

Problems identified in efforts to diversify family composition include: safety/distance (Bolivia); difficulty in not giving student to previously successful families (Mexico); lack of physical space in lower income households (Jamaica and Mexico-Oaxaca); adequate financial remuneration (Brazil-Fortaleza).

Orientation/Follow-up:

The literature unanimously reported that quality support, orientation and debriefing result in superior programs. Adequate orientation which deals with expectations and realities is repeatedly suggested for both students and host families (Lee 1982). Several studies (Drysdale and Killelea, 1982 and Lee, 1989) emphasize the importance of follow-up and ongoing support during the homestay.

All the Americas programs provide some kind of homestay orientation for students. In most programs, the orientation is conducted by the ADs and the

homestay coordinator and includes elements of the following: discussions and activities that focus on situations and case studies, customs, personal space and differences, family schedules, health and safety, expectations vs. reality, intercultural communication, problem resolution, social and sexual interaction between youth, the importance of the student adapting to family rather than vice versa, objectives of the homestay, expected behaviors. In two programs, students are provided information on the family before beginning the homestay; in six programs students meet with families before the homestay begins and in Bolivia a structured introduction activity is included (see Appendix 2); in one program students sign a written homestay contract (see Appendix 2) and in two programs there are two sessions - one general and one individual that is specific to the particular family.

Students receive ongoing support during the homestay - in some cases with specific sessions during the homestay period, in others with coordinator visits to the family (not related to payment) during the homestay, and in all cases, by making it clear to the students that they should bring any homestay concerns to the coordinator and/or AD. Several programs also provide a debriefing session for students - Jamaica, Chile and Brazil-Fortaleza ask students for written evaluations of the family (see Appendix 2).

All programs also provide orientation to the families. These sessions include: responsibilities of the students and families (three programs), food and water issues (three programs), privacy issues, the importance of communication (three programs), differences in customs (all programs). Other topics covered by different programs include: expectations, clarifying that students are to adapt to family rules and not vice versa, the importance of incorporating the student into daily life, detailed information on the program, the need for families to interact with student, role plays and case studies. The Brazil-Fortaleza program sends each homestay family an introductory letter which describes the program, its objectives and activities, in detail. Most programs provide informal support to the family during the homestay; some structure in mid-homestay visits, one provides recipes to families with vegetarian students. Seven programs conduct debriefing with homestay families ranging from group discussions, individual meetings, questionnaires and telephone calls. No program mentioned that they sign contracts with families, but in the literature, Iowa Wesleyan recommends that families sign a contract with the sending institution.

While almost all programs felt that their orientation/support/debriefing system is adequate, nearly all had suggestions about how it could be strengthened. These include: either the homestay coordinator or AD having lunch with the family while the student is there; providing families more information on SIT; asking previous families to assist in orienting new families; providing several basic vegetarian recipes based on local cuisine; having coordinators participate in the academic part of the program;

families; providing several basic vegetarian recipes based on local cuisine; having coordinators participate in the academic part of the program; developing a written contract specifying obligations and responsibilities; responding to problems more quickly; making sure students understand that there are situations they should not tolerate in the name of cultural sensitivity and adaptation.

Problems and Resolution Mechanisms:

AFS reports that it moves approximately 25% of students in their year-long programs to different homestays. AFS researchers insist that family moves involve no fault or blame and should be seen as a normal, unavoidable part of running a program. (Lee and Hansel, 1984)

Grove and Hansel (1984) found certain family dynamics as underlying many of the difficulties in homestay placements. These are: 1) lack of enthusiasm of host siblings; 2) a hypercritical stance taken by exchange student; 3) absence of host siblings in the home; 4) difficult personality of student; 5) unwillingness of student to participate in family life and 6) clash of student goals and family expectations.

Gordon (1974) found that seemingly trivial cross-cultural misunderstandings seriously undermined the relationship between students and hosts in a surprisingly high number of cases. He also found that the "mechanisms of social control that generally operate within our own society to get us to accept obligations as well as rights do not operate immediately upon the sojourner in the host culture." (p. 98)

Another area which created tensions in the homestay was the issue of independence. Grove and Hansel (1984) found that students who have lived on their own are less likely to conform to family life in another culture. The issue more frequently arises with female students who are usually more strictly supervised than at home (when the homestay student is from the U.S.) and whose relative freedom of movement is sometimes seen as setting a bad example for the host family daughter. Students unwittingly had the tendency to compare the host family with the freedom of their situation living in a dorm or apartment. Student desire to be a member of the host family and to receive some special support, help and advice in a foreign environment is often in direct conflict with a desire for emancipation from the older generation. (Gordon, 1974)

Other problems arise when the families have unrealistic expectations of the students. Sometimes families want the student so they can teach them or their children English or increase their status. Some think the student will be a good influence on their children or will assist with domestic chores. (Lee,

1989, Ladd, 1990) Gordon (1974) found Colombians faced an inherent contradiction in their expectations: while they wanted the Americans to behave according to house rules with the obligations of someone of their age, they also expected them to provide additional advantages (such as the chance to practice English).

With host family siblings there is often an unrealistic expectation of a close relationship on both sides (Gordon 1974). Sometimes the host sibling believes the student will increase his/her status (Lee, 1989). Gordon (1974) also found that the student can serve as a wedge between the host family and their children when there are tensions in that relationship. For example, the children often use the student's greater independence to bargain concessions from their parents. Students also often have unrealistic expectations of living with young children. Few consider the noise and constant invasion of privacy involved.

Gordon (1974) found that U.S. students had very little grasp of what their Colombian families expected of them, and conflicts and misunderstanding arose around issues such as bathroom use, open or shut doors in bedrooms, standards of dress and cleanliness at home, and the central role of greetings in Colombian society. Students also have unrealistic ideas about the payment their families receive. Often students express that they don't want to live with families because they are "doing it for the money". This reflects an often unrealistic expectation of altruism, especially in poor countries. (Gordon, 1974)

Often the expressed desire of students to live in low income families are not realistic. When they are placed in these settings, they complain about the lack of physical comforts. (Gordon, 1974, Ecuador ADs, August 1994)

Another principal area of potential conflict is the issue of the maid in families that have one. The lack of experience with maids combined with a lack of experience in running a household, produce little comprehension of the role of maids and their duties in the family. Some students expect that because there is a maid it is unnecessary for them to assist with housework, not understanding that in southern countries without many appliances, housework takes far more time. Sometimes students are overly familiar with the maids which makes the families uncomfortable. As the kind of paternalistic relationships found in an employer/maid relationship in Latin America are largely absent from U.S. society, the different expectations in these kinds of relationships can be confusing.

Gordon (1974) found that different uses of physical space can be the basis for misunderstanding. For example, he notes that there is less interaction among neighbors in the Colombian middle class than in the U.S. and that in the

Colombian house the upstairs is used for socializing more frequently than in the US.

The most frequent problems identified by ADs and homestay coordinators are the following: messy students; overly busy students (two programs); privacy issues; individualism of students; independence of students; stereotyped gender role expectations of students; inappropriate behavior in terms of pets; personality differences; food; lack of student respect and failure to maintain contact after departure; and families with no social life. All programs used discussion and negotiation to resolve problems, sometimes involving the AD at the first sign of difficulty, sometimes bringing the AD in later. The only program which has never moved a student is Belize. When a move is made, all programs provide follow-up support to the family that is left. Mexico-Morelia provides compensation to the family if they are not deemed responsible for the reason that the student had to be moved. Mexico-Oaxaca noted that when it was decided that a move must be made, it was done quickly. Four programs felt that they had confronted problems in the homestay that they had been unable to resolve satisfactorily.

Homestays during Independent Study Projects (ISP):

On average, 38% of students use some form of homestay during their Independent Study Projects, with a range from 10% in Belize, Chile, Bolivia and Brazil-Fortaleza to 98% in Jamaica. Half of the programs encourage homestays during the ISP period for the following reasons: it improves integration (three programs), safety (two programs), provides a headstart on ISP (two programs), strengthens language skills, provides students diverse experiences, and costs less than other options. Both ISP advisors and students arrange these homestays. A significant number involve the original homestay family or a relative of the original family.

The biggest problem faced in these homestay arrangements is payment. How this is arranged, how it is carried out, how much it should be are all difficult terrain for students to navigate. For those who return to their original homestay families, most of the problems that arise revolve around sufficient space to work and pressures to be with the family rather than carry out the ISP.

Village Stays:

A review of the literature revealed that virtually no information has been gathered on the role of village stays in study abroad programs. Because of this, the information here reflects the answers to the questions about village stays directed at the Academic Directors.

Site selection/length of stay and why:

All programs in the Americas set up their village stays through a coordinator. This person may be either a leader in the community or a church or NGO representative in the community. The community was selected in a variety of ways: through personal contacts, through inherited arrangements and through community projects. The length of stay ranges between 3-4 days in Brazil-Amazon to two weeks in Belize and Jamaica with an average of 7 days. The reasons given for the particular length chosen were in some cases logistical (boat and bus schedules), in some cases programmatic (not enough time for it to be longer - three programs). Other reasons include: this was the amount of time the AD felt necessary for familiarization with the setting and because it was considered the maximum students could stand the privations associated with the poverty that village life frequently represents.

The village stay plays an important role in most programs. It provides an important comparison with urban life and a relief to the intensity of the urban experience (Jamaica); it prepares students for the Independent Study Project experience; it provides a means to shift to the more individual learning process involved in the ISP phase; and it gives students a good grasp of how the majority of most countries' people live.

Pros and cons of work camps:

In a few Americas programs, a workcamp is featured as an entry into village life. In Belize, the project is decided by the community; however it is not considered much use by all parties involved. The pros are that it creates bonding opportunities and the cons are that it leads to the villagers relying on students to do projects for them. In Brazil-Fortaleza, there is student participation in urban community development projects, however the emphasis is more on learning than on working. The pros are that it is intensive and linked to daily reality; the con is that the time is too short.

Academic and learning goals:

The goals for the village stay include providing for additional language acquisition and an initial field experience prior to the ISP (two programs), serving as a part of the Methods course, focusing interests, exposing students to a diversity of lifestyles (two programs), balancing theory with experience, providing connection between macro and micro perspectives on the society, understanding urban/rural difference and providing an important immersion experience. All programs felt that the village stay achieves these goals through: better focusing the student, providing insight on data collection, providing an experiential process, reviewing readings and holding discussions related to the stay and preparing oral reports.

All programs except two use the same community for village stays each semester. The other programs (Jamaica and Chile) rotate or alternate among different communities. The number of repetitions as of 1995 ranged from twice in Belize to over six times in Mexico. The programs generally planned to continue using the same community. The difficulties identified in moving include identifying contacts for new communities, the enormous time and effort involved in setting up a village stay and identifying objectives with new people. The problems with staying with the same communities are identified as increased dependency, increased comparison between students, wearing out the program's welcome and ensuring that the experience is equally beneficial to both parties.

All programs described the impact on the village as positive. One program (Brazil-Fortaleza) felt that to achieve this requires strict rules, strong local leadership and strong understanding by students of their roles. The reasons why the impact is considered positive are because of the income it provides (three programs), and the entertainment and education for the community (three programs). Two programs (Chile and Ecuador-R) felt that the stay had little impact.

The concerns that ADs have about village stays are: that all families have access to the benefits they provide; that students on occasion behave inappropriately; that students don't always maintain contact; that villagers form the impression that Americans are there to study them; that fair compensation for the community by providing social benefits as well as private payments to families is difficult to achieve; that it is difficult to achieve local participation in deciding the nature of the village stay.

Guidelines:

General proposed guidelines for CSA programs are listed hereHomestay materials used by Americas ADs which might be of use in other programs are found in Appendix 2.

On the basis of this study, the following is recommended:

Family Selection/Composition:

-Families should be drawn from as broad a range as feasible in order to use family as mirror of society as a whole to increase overall educational goals.

-Give preference to families that are NOT friends of the homestay coordinator/AD as this makes it easier to deal with potential conflicts and disagreements

-Families with siblings are preferred over those without; and same age-same sex siblings can be excellent but are not vital. (Younger homestay siblings are often more accessible and develop closer ties than older ones who have more independent lives.)

- The entire family should be committed to having a student, not just one member.

-Families should be located at a reasonable proximity to the program classroom(s) (no more than half an hour in cases where students return home for lunch; no more than an hour in other cases).

- Families should be active and both willing and able to incorporate students into their activities.

-Homestays shorter than two weeks should be avoided.

-Reasonable efforts should be made to ensure that both families and students are in good health so as to avoid the transmission of communicable diseases.

-A contract should be drawn up and signed with the family to clarify responsibilities and obligations among the family, student and organizing institution.

Homestay Coordinators

-Written job descriptions are advisable for homestay coordinators to clarify their responsibilities and obligations.

-It is crucial that homestay coordinators have excellent interpersonal communication skills.

-It is ideal if the coordinator has had a homestay experience him or herself.

- The homestay coordinators who participated in this study have requested specific information on what students would prefer in a homestay (large or small, income level, children or not, if a single parent family is OK and food preferences). CSA-Brattleboro has concerns that soliciting this information from students could result in generating student expectations that cannot be filled. For this reason, this study finding has not been transferred into a guideline, although Appendix 1 does provide a format for the kind of information that homestay coordinators are looking for.

-Student photos should always be sent to the homestay coordinators. Coordinators should also be provided information on family life in the U.S.

Orientation/Follow-up

-Orientation should be provided for students and for families. This orientation should include specific information on how to deal with cross-cultural norms specific to the culture. Both students and families should be encouraged to set and clarify goals and expectations for the homestay.

-Follow-up and ongoing support for both families and students is essential.

-Debriefing on the homestay is recommended for both students and families by the Academic Director and/or the homestay coordinator.

Problem Resolution

-Prompt response to homestay problems should be prioritized.

-Moves should be made minimizing the guilt experienced by either party.

Village Stays:

-Village stays should always be organized through a local coordinator. This person should be selected with care to ensure that s/he is respected in the community and is known to be fair in selecting families.
-Students should be provided a thorough briefing and debriefing of the village stay.
-Care should be taken to ensure that the stay does not provide economic benefits to only one section of the community.
-Where feasible it is recommended that part of the economic benefit go to the community as a whole and not only to the individual family.
-Where possible village sites should be rotated or changed so as to minimize dependency and comparison among students.

Recommendations:

This study has served to elicit substantive information about two important CSA program components. It is recommended that such studies be considered for various aspects of CSA programs so as to synthesize knowledge and permit continuous improvements in program quality.

In order to address the absence of shared experience and materials identified at the beginning of this study, it is recommended that concerted efforts be made to provide ADs with more tools for developing effective homestays and village stays. Specifically in relation to homestays, it is recommended that:

1) sample host family and student contracts, homestay coordinator job descriptions, suggestions for dealing with people with limited language skills (in Spanish and Portuguese), student evaluation questions be drawn up;

2) a workshop on how to handle moving students be designed and conducted at an AD workshop.

Appendix 1: Possible Questionnaire for Students:

To place you in an appropriate homestay, please respond to the following questions. Please indicate your preferences in a homestay below. PLEASE BE VERY CLEAR THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT YOUR HOMESTAY WILL HAVE THE CHARACTERISTICS YOU LIST HERE.

1) What size family would you prefer?
1-3 _____ 3-5 _____5+_____

2) What ages of children would you prefer? (you can mark more than one)
1-6_____7-12 _____ 13-17 _____ 17+ _____

3) Are you comfortable with a single parent family?
yes _____ no _____

4) What social class (within the context of the host society) would you be most comfortable with?
working class _____ middle_____ upper middle _____

5) Please explain any food preferences/allergies you may have in some detail.

How flexible about food preferences on a scale of 1-5 are you willing to be?

1	2	3	4	5
flexible				inflexible

Why?

6) Briefly describe what you would consider an ideal family. (eg. active, religious, boisterous, quiet, etc.)

7) Briefly describe you interests. (eg. music, politics, cooking, hiking etc.) _

Appendix 2: Homestay Materials from ASA-Americas

Jamaica: The Homestay Experience: The best classroom in the World

Can you believe it? That ten weeks would rush by so quickly? Believe it or not, it has. Please....take a moment to reflect...and respond to the following questins to document your evaluation of the experience.

a) Has the homestay experience provided you with a supportive base to understand and interact with Jamaican culture and other aspects of the programme? If yes, how? If no, what are the factors which mitigated against the homestay providing you with this sustenance?

b) In what specific ways did you integrate with the members of your family?

c) What were some of the problems you encountered?

d) Were you adequately fed? If yes, what were some of your favourites? If no, what dietary inclusions or differences would you have preferred?

e) To what extent did you participate in the family's social activities? Were there occasions when you felt excluded?

f) Were you able to negotiate sufficient space for yourself? If not, what impact did this denied need have on your sense of personal comfort?

g) How were the power relations expressed in the family? Did you experience instances of control?

h) How did you contribute to the homestay?

i) Will contact be maintained with the family when you leave? If yes, why? If no, why not?

j) What advice would you give a future U.S. student about to live with the same family?

k) What would you do differently if you were to live with this family again?

l) How would you assess how the homestay was managed? i.e. what were the strengths and weaknesses of the coordination?

Brazil-Fortaleza: U.S. Cultural Values (provided to homestay families)

1) Importance of Personal Initiative:

U.S. people consider that people have to or can modify their own lives and/or their environment, considering this a sign of individual initiative or interest.

2) Change

Changing habits or clothing is seen as a quality. Change is strongly linked to personal development, progress and growth.

3) Punctuality

Time is very important to people from the U.S. Activities are planned to begin and end at a specific time, and this plan is normally followed to the letter. Punctuality is obligatory.

4) Equality

This is one of the values that is most important to Americans. Everyone should be treated as equals, without regard to their physical, economic or intellectual conditions.

5) Individualism and Privacy

Americans consider that every person is unique, special and different from everyone else. In this sense, everyone is important and essential.
Privacy is seen as a positive condition which is necessary and desired by everyone. Privacy is highly important to Americans.

6) Determination

Americans value people who are determined, and who, through their own efforts, achieve their objectives.

7) Competititon

In a competitive environment, people manage to give their best. Americans credit healthy competition with always giving the best results for society. The U.S. economic system reflects the importance of competition.

8) Future Orientation

Americans plan and work with a view always toward the future. Present action is carried out to guarantee a better and easier future.

9) Work

The appreciation that Americans have for work can best be translated by the maxim: "Work dignifies man". As a consequence, their hours of relaxation are planned and limited.

10) Informality

Americans are extremely informal, both in the way they treat other people as well as in the way they dress.

11) Objectivity, Frankness and Honesty

Americans do not like to leave a situation unclear. They value being frank and objective on all occasions, even the most delicate ones.

12) Practicality and Efficiency

Practicality, linked to efficiency, is present in everything that Americans do.

13) Materialism

Generally foreigners think Americans are more materialistic than they actually are. The acquisition of consumer objects is seen as a fair reward, due to the fruit of their labors and the dedication of the individual.

Brazil-Fortaleza - Homestay Family application form:

This information is gathered to choose Brazilian families who would be appropriate for an American student to stay with. The information provided will not be shared or published in any form. All the information will be kept with those responsible for the SIT program in the state of Ceará. Please consider whether you are really interested in the program and use accurate information.

Name of person making the request:
Telephone:
Age:
Email address:
Student at IBEU-CE?

Father's name:
Place and date of birth:
Profession:
Job Title:
Location of job:
Work Telephone:

Mother's name:
Place and date of birth:
Profession:
Job Title:
Location of job:
Work Telephone:

All the people who live in the house:

Name	Sex	Age	Relationship

Have you ever had a foreigner stay in your house? If yes, for how long?

Why are you interested in having a foreigner student stay with you?

Would you prefer a student who is:
Male Female No preference

Does anyone in your family speak English?

Is smoking permitted in your house?

Do you practice a religion?

Do you have any racial or religious prejudices or restrictions?

Do you have domestic servants?

Would the student have to share a room with anyone?

Do you have domestic animals?

What kinds of foods do you eat?

Does anyone in the family play a sport or a musical instrument?

What does your family do on the weekends?

Anything else you want to tell us about your family?

Homestay Coordinator - sample duties - Bolivia:

a) The coordinator will develop and maintain a data base on families where students can be placed. This information should include the names of the families, their principal activities, their address, telephone numbers (work and home - in cases where there is no phone, the telephone number where a message can be left) and other comments about the family. This data base should be developed on the basis of personal and professional contacts and efforts should be made to expand its base to include families of campesino origin, from the working class and ex-miners, professionals, etc.

b) In coordination with the Academic Director(s), families for the students will be selected when the student information arrives from Brattleboro. In selecting the families, it is important that families have at least a three month lapse between students. Given that the time between the Fall and Spring semester is very short and that some students stay after the program, we want to avoid any family having students continuously. In general, families will not receive more than three students in total.

c) After the first selection is made, an interview will be done with each family to make sure that they are able to accept a student. In this interview, the expectations for the homestays will be explained. The meeting will be with the entire family and not just with the mother given that we want to be sure that the students are really incorporated into the family. This interview will be held with each family, even those who have successfully hosted students in the past.

d) When a family has been accepted as a host family, the relevant information about them from the data base will be provided to each student during orientation.

e) The homestay coordinator will meet the students at the airport with the Academic Director(s).

f) The homestay coordinator will participate in the homestay orientation session held during orientation.

g) The homestay coordinator will assist in organizing the reception and serve to introduce students and families during the informal welcome supper for the families and students.

h) The homestay coordinator will accompany students when they first go to their families' homes.

i) During the first two weeks of the program, the coordinator will participate in two meetings with students about homestay to ensure that everything is going well.

j) The coordinator will pay the families (three payments) using this occasion to check to see if everything is going well from the family's perspective. (The program will pay for the transport for these visits.) If it seems there is any problem, this must be reported immediately to the Academic Directors.

k) Participate in the farewell party with the families and the students. It is important that at the party, the coordinator arrives before the families to assist in introducing them to each other.

l) Every semester, evaluate with the Director(s) the homestays used with a view to continuously strengthening this part of the program. The criteria for the selection and retention of families should be part of this discussion.

m) At the end of the semester, after the students have left, an evaluation session with the families is organized with the full participation of the coordinator.

Appendix3:
HOMESTAYS - AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY - NOVEMBER 1996

American Field Service, **Orientation Handbook Vol. VI,** Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME 1987
Practical advice on how to establish and run international educational programs with a homestay component emphasizing briefing/debriefing for students and providing case studies.

Altbach, Phillip and David Kelly **Research on Foreign Students and International Study: An Overview and Bibliography,** Praeger, New York 1985
A general overview of research on international study without specific materials on homestays but frequent references to the importance of positive cross-cultural contact in successful overseas experiences.

Anon. **Friendship with an international student: a guide for new American Host Families.** 1984
Advice for U.S. host families on culture shock, the first visit, stages of the student's adjustment and mealtimes.

Bard, Burton E. Jr. **Foreign Students evaluate the host family experience.** National Foreign Studies Association newsletter 20(8):12 May 1969
Describes an evaluation of a program for foreign students at the University of Washington that consisted of a required week long homestay with an American family. 430 students responded and of that number 95% said they would recommend participation in a homestay program to their friends. Five out of eight students preferred a homestay family with children, and the majority indicated that they were most likely to discuss personal problems with their host families rather than their student advisers.

Baty, Roger and Eugene Dold, **Cross-Cultural Homestays: An Analysis of College Students' Response after Living in an Unfamiliar Culture.** International Journal of International Relations, 1977
Forty-five Johnston College students who had participated in a one month homestay in the Southwestern U.S. and Mexico. The study found the experience more unsettling for males than for females who were able to find roles which enabled them to participate in the family more easily than men.

Consumer Information Center, **One Friendship at a Time: your Guide to International Youth Exchange,** 1983
Practical advice including a section "Volunteering to be a Host Family" which reviews common problems and concerns.

Dragonas, Phyllis, J. **The High School Goes Abroad: International Homestay Exchange Programs**, Center for Applied Linguistics, Baltimore, 1983
Discusses the rationale for homestays. From this author's perspective, homestays enhance motivation for language learning, and improve cultural awareness and attitudes towards the host country.

Drysdale, Susan and Frances Killelea, **Guide to Conducting a Language Immersion/Homestay Program.** American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. 1982
Practical suggestions for setting up homestays oriented to language teachers based on a program set up in Switzerland by high school French teachers. Emphasizes the importance of maintaining contact with family and student during the experience in order to identify areas of potential conflict early.

Golden, J.S., **Student Adjustment Abroad: a psychiatrist's view.** International Educational and Cultural Exchange Spring 1973

Goldstein, Jill Paula, **A Malay Village Homestay: A Window on the Host Culture**, Master's thesis, Master of Arts in Teaching, School for International Training, Brattleboro, VT 1994
A description of a brief homestay experience in a rural Malay village by teenagers from an international school in Kuala Lumpur. Considers the impact on the children's cross-cultural understanding and the use of journal writing as a means of personal growth and development.

Gordon, Raymond, **Living in Latin America: a case study in cross-cultural communication.** National Textbook Company 1974
An extremely interesting study of U.S. college students in long term homestays (9 months to a year) in middle class Colombian families. Examines miscommunications in great detail through looking at the locus of potential conflicts (bathroom, bedroom etc.) as well as problems that can arise in interpersonal interactions with family members, relatives and friends (e.g. the mother, children, maid and so on). Includes practical suggestions on what behaviors are expected in this particular cultural context.

Grove, Cornelius Lee, **Orientation Handbook for Youth Exchange Programs.** Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME 1989
Practical and detailed guide to youth exchange programs which includes homestay guidelines with considerable detail and intelligence, clearly drawn from the long experience AFS has had with this kind of program.

Grove, Cornelius Lee, **Dynamics of International Host Families.** American Field Service International, New York. 1984
Study of 15 U.S. host families who took a foreign student for 10 months. Each family was interviewed 7 times during the homestay. The findings indicated "that a successful host experience was directly related to positive personality

factors rather than cultural factors; positive student-host sibling relationships rather than student-host parent relationships; exchange student willingness to become involved in host family activities; and, infrequent contact with the student's natural parents".

Grove, Cornelius Lee, **What research and informed opinion have to say about very short exchange programs.** American Field Service, New York, 1983
Concludes that these kind of programs are generally ineffective in meeting their goals and can in fact be negative because cross-cultural miscommunication rather communication is frequently the norm.

Grove, Cornelius Lee, **Improving Intercultural Learning through the Orientation of Sojourners.** American Field Service Occasional Papers in Intercultural Learning, New York,1982
Stresses the importance of adequate orientation of students, host families and natural parents for successful homestay experiences. Suggests that training is usually too practical without adequate emphasis on how to intensify cross-cultural learning.

Grove, Cornelius Lee and Bettina Hansel, **Two Doctoral Dissertations concerning the International Exchange of Secondary Students: Reviews and Critiques.** American Field Service Occasional Papers #2, 1982
A case study and a quantitative study examining sojourners experience. The case study documents the difficult relationship of a Brazilian student with an unprepared and sometimes hostile host family in the U.S. and an uncommunicative program coordinator. As a result of his experiences, the student became depressed, angry and manipulative. The second study sampled 209 exchange students and their host families. The study found that a psychological testing tool, the Loevinger sentence completion test, is a possible method of predicting success overseas.

Grove, Cornelius Lee and Bettina Hansel, **The Study of the Dynamics of Hosting: Preliminary Report.** American Field Service, New York 1982.
Study of 12 U.S. families that explores the adjustment cycles in homestays. Rather than the U-shaped curve developed by Lysgaard in the 1950's to describe cultural adjustment, the authors propose a wave pattern of highs and lows: a high point upon arrival, followed by a low as culture shock sets in, an upswing as superficial accommodation to the host culture occurs, then a downturn of frustration, followed by an upturn of genuine adjustment, then a dip as the return jitters and reverse culture shock take place and then finally an upswing of resolution of the experience.

Hansel, Bettina and Cornelius Lee Grove, **Learning by Doing: What a High School Student can Learn from a Homestay Abroad.** Journal of College Admissions n107, p.26-31. Spring 1985

Surveyed 1,100 recently returned American Field Service on 17 characteristics of personal development. Strongest evidence showed students developed strong skepticism of stereotypes.

Hansel, Bettina, **The AFS Impact study: Final Report**. American Field Service Research Report #33, 1986
A long term study by AFS seeking to document changes in learning and personal development associated with a homestay program. Students who were interested in an exchange but did not actually go on one were used as a control group. The study, based on questionnaires used in pre- and post-testing environments, examines and compares growth in intercultural knowledge and sensitivity, awareness of global issues and interpersonal relationships. The most important characteristic identified in terms of learning was the student's emotional involvement with the host culture. Significant increases in altruism and idealism were also found.

Harris, Mary J. G., **Establishing an IEP Monthly Weekend Homestay.** 1993
Practical guide to establishing a series of weekend homestays for international students at Iowa Wesleyan College.

Hartung, Elizabeth Ann, **Cultural Adjustment Difficulties of Japanese Adolescents Sojourning in the U.S.A.** American Field Service Center of Intercultural Learning, Occasional Paper #5, Nov. 1983
In order to improve orientation for Japanese students in U.S. high schools, a study was conducted of 106 students which sought to identify the problems they have. The study found that there were few problems in relationships with host parents and children. However when problems did arise, most students reported that it was extremely difficult to discuss them with the host family.

Hensley, T.R. and D.K. Sell, **A Study Abroad Program: An examination of impacts on student attitudes.** Teaching Political Science, 6, 1979
Tested study abroad students on four criteria: worldmindedness, support for the United Nations, self-esteem and tolerance of ambiguity. Found that the most evident change was in self-esteem including student confidence, adaptability and respect for other cultures, rather than in increased academic achievement.

Hill, Deborah A, ed., **Crises, Emergencies and the Study Abroad Program**. Renaissance, 1989

Jardine, Douglas, K. **Involving the Community.** Capilano College, Vancouver, Canada. 1990
Description of how to involve local community in international student program.

King, Nancy and Ken Huff, **Host Family Survival Kit: a guide for American host families.** Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME 1985
This book provides a step by step guide for U.S. families hosting year long high school students. It is an excellent practical guide to homestays, with detailed suggestions for families at eight stages of the experience to enable them to make the most of the crosscultural experience offered by hosting.

Ladd, Jennifer, **Subject India: a semester abroad.** Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME. 1990
Detailed description of a CSA program in India in the 1980's. Only reference found in the literature to village stays. She raises many of the concerns currently expressed by ADs.

Martin, Judith, **The impact of a homestay abroad on Relationships at Home.** American Field Service Center of Intercultural Learning, Occasional Paper #8, Sept. 1985
A sample of 173 newly returned AFS students who responded to questions about how an overseas homestay affected their relationships. The impact on relationships with siblings and parents was minimal, although students reported increased frequency of communication with their parents after their homestay. Friendships and romantic relationships were most likely to suffer and this was attributed to the rapid maturation of the student during their overseas experience.

Tuffo, Kelly M., **Narratives of Student Experience, Reflection and Transformation in Experiential, Cross-cultural Learning.** Master's thesis, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, 1994
Chapter Five focuses on the importance of relationships in experiential education, cultural immersion and as the basis for cross-cultural learning. Within this context, the homestay is examined as an important vehicle in attaining these goals.

Weaver, Henry D, ed., **Research on U.S. students abroad: A bibliography of abstracts**, Council on International Educational Exchange, 1989
Extensive bibliography on international studies. Some references to research on homestays.